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ABSTRACT

This competency test package, one of a series of test packages for office occupations education, contains a list of performance objectives; a pool of objective questions matched with these performance objectives; a sample, 50-point objective test; and several performance test activities. The package also includes complete directions for the student and the instructor, plus answer keys and a guide for evaluating the tests. Suggestions for adapting the tests for special needs students are provided. These tests cover writing business letters to promote goodwill, answer requests, and express positive and negative responses. (This competency test package can be coordinated with a slide/tape module.) (KC)

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INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

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DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

Competency Test Package

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DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

Competency Test Package

Prepared by Donna Hines

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DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:
Writing Business Letters

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DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:
Writing Business Letters

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Bill Barnes, Ph.D., Director
Occupational Curriculum Laboratory

INTRODUCTION

This competency test package was developed as a result of a proposal funded by the Texas Education Agency to the Occupational Curriculum Laboratory at East Texas State University. Based on the results of a needs assessment of selected postsecondary office occupations instructors from across the state, this and several other tests have been developed to test competencies taught in audiovisual instructional modules previously developed by the Occupational Curriculum Laboratory. However, the tests, accompanied by performance objectives, are of a general nature and could be used to evaluate competency of any instructional method in this specific subject area.

Evaluation is most successful when objectives are clearly stated in advance of a learning experience and should be used to measure students' attainment of those specific objectives. Competency tests allow teachers to make a judgment about student progress in relation to a pre-determined standard. These standards should reflect those established by the business community for entry level employees. It is important that students understand the criteria that are used to evaluate their competency in a given subject area.

Therefore, materials in the audiovisual modules, as well as the competency test packages, have been developed with student needs and interests in mind. They are designed with flexibility for use as supplementary or primary teaching aids in many of the office occupations classes. As a result, the students should find the material practical and job-related.

Each competency test package includes a list of performance objectives; a pool of objective questions matched with these performance objectives; a sample, 50-point objective test; and several performance test activities. The package also includes complete directions for the student and the instructor, plus answer keys and a guide for evaluating the tests.

ADMINISTERING COMPETENCY TESTS

TO

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

Within the wide range of special needs students, fall the physically and mentally handicapped, disadvantaged, and limited English proficient students. These individuals should be viewed on the basis of their potential contributions to the world of work, not on their limiting factors. In considering these students for vocational training, however, it is important to remember the factors that may make a job inaccessible or difficult to perform. Often these difficulties can be overcome or eliminated through modifications in the training program. Performance standards should not be reduced, but rather the student's potential ability should be realistically identified and carefully matched to attainable employment opportunities.

Federal law states that employers must make reasonable efforts to accommodate a worker's handicap (Sections 503 and 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, P.L. 93-112). The 1976 Education Amendment to the Vocational Education Act (P.L. 94-482) mandates the provision for appropriate vocational training for all special needs students and stresses program and facility accessibility to them. It is therefore important that office education teachers have a basic understanding of special needs students and the problems that may be encountered when working with them.

Much literature has been printed on this topic. Two good resources are published by the Occupational Curriculum Laboratory. The Texas Handbook for Serving Vocational Special Needs Students will be available during the 1984-85 school year. A second publication, Special Needs Adaptations for Office Education Teachers, describes in depth students who are hearing impaired, mentally retarded, physically impaired, and visually handicapped. This handbook also suggests methods for adapting lesson materials to students with any of these handicaps.

This criterion-based test is an excellent means for measuring the competencies of special needs students because their performance is not compared with their "normal" peers. Rather, each student, whether special needs or not, is evaluated in relation to competencies necessary to perform tasks common in the world of work. If necessary, however, these materials can be adapted for special needs students. For example, test materials may be reproduced in large print or questions given orally or recorded for visually impaired students. Additional time to complete answers may be necessary for mentally or physically impaired students and disadvantaged students who are one or more academic grade levels behind. The reading level of questions may also need to be readjusted for the learning disabled, disadvantaged, and limited English proficient students. A translation of the test materials into a student's native language may also be necessary. Hearing impaired students should not have difficulty with this test, as long as directions are clearly explained and/or given in writing. The flexibility of these test materials gives teachers opportunities to adapt evaluation measures to special needs students.

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE
GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

This competency test package is coordinated with the slide/tape module,

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION: WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS.

The package offers the instructor flexibility of test design to meet the individual needs of instructors and students.

Uses for Competency Tests

1. Pre-Test:

   Materials in this competency test package may be used to pre-test students in this subject area. If a satisfactory level of mastery is demonstrated, no instruction is necessary, and students may pass to a higher level of instruction. Otherwise, the students would proceed with the planned schedule of instruction.

2. Individualized Instruction:

   The slide/tape package, with its accompanying competency test, may be used for individualized instruction. After brief directions from the instructor, the student views the slide/tape presentation, completes the activity packet, and is then ready for the competency test. If test results show a weakness in an area, the student should review that portion of the slide/tape presentation, and retake the test. This method, plus extra help from the teacher or a tutor, would be ideal for instructing special needs students. They could progress at a rate that meets their individual needs.

3. Group Instruction:

   The slide/tape package may be used as a supplement to a regular curriculum for group instruction. After viewing the slide/tape presentation, participating in classroom discussion, and completing the student activity packet, the student should be able to demonstrate proficiency in items listed in the performance objectives. The competency test can be used to measure students' progress toward meeting those objectives.

4. Remedial Instruction:

   Students in advanced classes who demonstrate a poor understanding of the subject matter may need remedial help. Competency tests in basic skills may be administered to diagnose the problem area(s). For example, students in word processing classes who lack basic English usage skills, could take the competency test in this area to locate the deficiency. Once identified, remedial instruction could be initiated.

5. Employment Screening:

This test material would be useful to employers for screening prospective employees for competency in this subject area. The test could be an effective tool in comparing skills of applicants and/or evaluating the applicant's training if the program is unfamiliar to the employer. Skills of applicants with work experience, but no formal training, could be measured to determine their comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Competency Test Resources

1. List of performance objectives

2. Pool of true-false, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and matching questions for each performance objective

3. Sample, 50-point objective test compiled from this pool of questions that may be easily reproduced and used in group or individual settings

4. Performance test activities that challenge the student to put the learned skill into practical application

5. Answer keys and a checklist for evaluating the test competencies

6. Color-coded materials for convenience in locating components:

BROWN	-	performance objectives	PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES
GREEN	-	pool of objective questions	OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS
YELLOW	-	sample objective test	OBJECTIVE TEST
BLUE	-	performance test situations	PERFORMANCE TEST
PINK	-	answer keys	ANSWER KEYS

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE
SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

Getting Ready to Test

The instructor should review the list of performance objectives to be certain instruction has been offered for each objective. A review session should be scheduled if needed. After instruction has been completed (either teacher-prepared or the slide/tape package), students will be ready for the competency test, which should include an objective and a performance test.

Preparing the Test

The instructor may choose to use the prepared, 50-point sample objective test or develop an original test from the pool of questions for each performance objective. The competency test should also include all or part of the performance test activities.

After determining which test materials to use, the instructor will prepare and reproduce a sufficient number of copies for the students. A copy of the mailability criteria should be provided for each student.

Prerequisite Skills

This material is designed to test proficiency of students who have completed training in language arts at the secondary and/or postsecondary level. To satisfactorily complete this competency test, the student will also need accurate typing skills and a knowledge of basic letter styles which are not taught in this slide/tape presentation.

Needed Equipment and Supplies

In addition to the test materials, the student will need access to a typewriter, typing paper, and supplies for making neat corrections.

Administering the Test in a Group or Individual Setting

1. Prepare and/or collect the test forms, supplies, and necessary equipment.

2. Prepare the room with adequate seating, sufficiently spaced to maintain control.

3. Provide a well-lighted place for each student, with adequate supplies, equipment, and workspace that is free from distractions.

4. Allow sufficient time to administer the test. The objective and performance tests need to be scheduled during different class periods.

5. Distribute and explain the criteria for mailability.

6. Give general instructions and distribute the test and necessary supplies. Ask if there are any questions.

7. Monitor students during the administration of the test to provide control for valid results.

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

1. The student will be able to compose goodwill letters of approximately three paragraphs, each containing the following:

   Paragraph 1 promotes goodwill.
   Paragraph 2 expands and explains.
   Paragraph 3 reiterates goodwill.

2. The student will be able to compose letters of request of approximately three paragraphs, each containing the following:

   Paragraph 1 states the request.
   Paragraph 2 explains the request.
   Paragraph 2 or 3 motivates the reader to act.
   Paragraph 3 or 4 courteously closes the letter.

3. The student will be able to compose letters of positive response of approximately three paragraphs, each containing the following:

   Paragraph 1 restates the request and responds with an affirmative answer.
   Paragraph 2 gives pertinent information.
   Paragraph 3 closes the letter with an expression of goodwill.

4. The student will be able to compose letters of negative response of approximately four paragraphs, each containing the following:

   Paragraph 1 expresses goodwill.
   Paragraph 2 says no and explains the refusal.
   Paragraph 3 offers an alternative, if available.
   Paragraph 4 closes the letter with an expression of goodwill.

5. The student will demonstrate the ability to use the following writing techniques:

   1. Message is concisely written.
   2. Transitions occur where necessary.
   3. The "you" attitude is obvious.
   4. The message is written using positive language.
   5. Sentence structure is varied.
   6. The writer has promoted goodwill.
   7. The letter is mechanically correct and accurate.

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

Suggested Evaluation Criteria

The following is a checklist that can be used when evaluating the student's competency in this area. The checklist is not intended as a method of grading but merely as a means of determining whether or not the student has mastered the competencies presented in the list of performance objectives. Place a check mark in the column at the right of each competency if it is satisfactorily completed.

I. 50-point objective test (approximate time: 45 minutes)
Completed with at least 70 percent accuracy. _____

II. Performance test (approximate time: three hours to compose, type, and correct four letters) Fill out a separate evaluation checklist for Test I, II, and III, if the student takes more than one test.

A. Goodwill Letter
1. Format
a. Paragraph 1 promotes goodwill. _____
b. Paragraph 2 expands and explains. _____
c. Paragraph 3 reiterates goodwill. _____
2. Writing techniques
a. Message is concisely written. _____
b. Transitions occur where necessary. _____
c. The "you" attitude is obvious. _____
d. The message is written using positive language. _____
e. Sentence structure is varied. _____
f. The writer has promoted goodwill. _____
g. The letter is mechanically correct and accurate. _____
h. Rate the mailability of the letter, M+, M, M-. _____

B. Letter of Request
1. Format
a. Paragraph 1 states the request. _____
b. Paragraph 2 explains the request. _____
c. Paragraph 2 or 3 motivates the reader to act. _____
d. Paragraph 3 or 4 courteously closes the letter. _____
2. Writing techniques
a. Message is concisely written. _____
b. Transitions occur where necessary. _____
c. The "you" attitude is obvious. _____
d. The message is written using positive language. _____
e. Sentence structure is varied. _____
f. The writer has promoted goodwill. _____
g. The letter is mechanically correct and accurate. _____
h. Rate the mailability of the letter, M+, M, M-. _____

C. Letter of Positive Response
1. Format
a. Paragraph 1 restates the request and responds with an affirmative answer. _____
b. Paragraph 2 gives pertinent information. _____
c. Paragraph 3 closes the letter with an expression of goodwill. _____

2. Writing techniques
   a. Message is concisely written. _____
   b. Transitions occur where necessary. _____
   c. The "you" attitude is obvious. _____
   d. The message is written using positive language. _____
   e. Sentence structure is varied. _____
   f. The writer has promoted goodwill. _____
   g. The letter is mechanically correct and accurate. _____
   h. Rate the mailability of the letter, M+, M, M-. _____

D. Letter of Negative Response
   1. Format
      a. Paragraph 1 expresses goodwill. _____
      b. Paragraph 2 says no and explains the refusal. _____
      c. Paragraph 3 offers an alternative, if available. _____
      d. Paragraph 4 closes the letter with an expression of goodwill. _____
   2. Writing techniques
      a. Message is concisely written. _____
      b. Transitions occur where necessary. _____
      c. The "you" attitude is obvious. _____
      d. The message is written using positive language. _____
      e. Sentence structure is varied. _____
      f. The writer has promoted goodwill. _____
      g. The letter is mechanically correct and accurate. _____
      H. Rate the mailability of the letter, M+, M, M-. _____

Note: Answer keys are not provided for the performance tests. Letters will vary according to individual writing styles and should be evaluated by the criteria above.

CRITERIA FOR MAILABLE DOCUMENTS

The criteria for evaluating mailability of performance test activities is adapted from the 1982-83 Secondary Competitive Events Guidelines, which includes three levels of mailability: M+, M, M-. Documents will be accepted in any approved style or format, or as specified in the directions. Credit can be given for partially completed problems.

I. M+ Mailable, perfect

A. All instructions were correctly followed.
B. Contains no uncorrected errors, misspellings, typographical errors, incorrect punctuation, incorrect capitalization, incorrect syllabication.
C. Contains no omissions in the body or opening and closing lines.
D. Neatly completed with good placement of document on the page.

II. M Mailable

A. All instructions were correctly followed.
B. Contains no uncorrected errors, misspellings, typographical errors, incorrect punctuation, incorrect capitalization, incorrect syllabication.
C. Neatly made but excessive corrections.
D. Less than ideal placement or spacing of the document on the page.
E. Omission of enclosure notation or reference initials.
F. Acceptable but undesireable division of words.
G. Acceptable but not most desireable use of capitalization or punctuation.
H. Omission or addition of word or words that do not change the meaning of a sentence.

III. M- Not Mailable

A. Instructions were not followed.
B. Uncorrected typographical errors.
C. Uncorrected, obvious strikeovers.
D. Misspelled words.
E. Essential punctuation or capitalization violation.
F. Basic grammar violations.
G. Omission or addition of word or words that change the meaning of a sentence.
H. Total incorrect placement or spacing of the document on the page.
I. Omission of a part of the document, i.e., date, inside address.
J. Distracting corrections, i.e., obvious use of liquid paper or correction tape, smudges, hole in paper, poor alignment, and incomplete erasures.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

OBJECTIVE TEST FOR:
DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:
WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS

NAME_____

DATE_____

Circle T for TRUE and F for FALSE for the following statements.

T F 1. A goodwill letter usually contains the following three paragraphs:
Paragraph 1 promotes goodwill.
Paragraph 2 expands and explains.
Paragraph 3 reiterates goodwill.

T F 2. A letter of request usually contains the following four paragraphs:
Paragraph 1 states the request.
Paragraph 2 motivates the reader to act.
Paragraph 3 explains the request.
Paragraph 4 closes courteously.

T F 3. The positive response letter usually contains the following three paragraphs:
Paragraph 1 restates the request and answers "yes."
Paragraph 2 gives any pertinent information.
Paragraph 3 closes with an expression of goodwill.

T F 4. The negative response letter usually contains the following three paragraphs:
Paragraph 1 expresses goodwill.
Paragraph 2 says "no" and explains the refusal.
Paragraph 3 closes with goodwill.

T F 5. Negative response letters are the most difficult to write because the letter must refuse to grant the request, but still retain the goodwill of the reader.

T F 6. Employers seek applicants with highly developed communication skills for office employees.

T F 7. All business letters have common purposes--to communicate ideas and to promote desired results.

T F 8. To encourage the reader to react in the way you wish, you must be able to show how that reaction will benefit your company.

T F 9. A reader-oriented letter will encourage the reader to react in a positive manner.

T F 10. On the average, business letters should be two to three paragraphs long.

11. Briefly explain the techniques of the "you" attitude in writing business letters and tell why it is important to building goodwill.

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. Briefly state the outline for a goodwill letter.

_____

_____

13. Briefly state the outline for a letter of request.

_____

_____

14. Briefly state the outline for a positive response letter.

_____

_____

15. Briefly state the outline for a negative response letter.

_____

_____

From the list below, indicate the type of business letter appropriate for the following situations.

A. Goodwill Letters
B. Letter of Request
C. Positive Response
D. Negative Response

_____16. Ask for a catalog from an office supply firm.

_____17. Congratulate a business associate on a promotion.

_____18. Refuse to send requested material due to its confidential nature.

_____19. The Red Cross asks for assistance for storm victims.

_____20. You respond to the Red Cross's plea for assistance by sending a $25 donation.

_____21. Send best wishes to an office employee on his/her forthcoming marriage.

_____22. A mail-order company sends requested materials.

_____23. Decline an invitation to speak at a club meeting due to a previous engagement.

_____24. A company announces the opening of a new branch office in your town.

_____25. Inform the customer you are unable to fill an order because the item is out of stock.

Match the following ten hints for communicating effectively with their definitions below.

A. Plan ahead	F. Converse with the reader
B. Be concise	G. Vary the sentence structure
C. Use transitions wisely	H. Keep paragraphs short
D. Rely on the "you" attitude	I. Maintain good will
E. Emphasize the positive	J. Assure correctness

_____26. Use a variety of sentence structures in each message, as a means of maintaining reader interest.

_____27. Point out to the reader what can be done rather than what cannot be done.

_____28. The purpose of any paragraph can usually be accomplished in one to five sentences.

_____29. Whenever you write a letter, picture the reader sitting across from you, then write as if you were speaking directly to the reader.

_____30. Know what you want to say before you begin to write.

_____31. After a piece of correspondence has been written and typed, proofread it. Be sure that the letter is placed attractively on the page, that it has been typed accurately, and that it states clearly the message you intended.

_____32. Keep the reader in mind at all times. After you have composed a message, reread it to see if it emphasizes the advantages to the reader rather than the benefit to the writer.

_____33. Any message you write should "flow" smoothly.

_____34. Never be short or sarcastic in your writing. If you alienate even one individual, that person may influence others to stop working with you.

_____35. The skilled writer knows how to judge the amount of information to include in a letter and how to write sentences and paragraphs that give complete information without being "wordy."

36. Transitional elements help the message flow from one thought to another. In the following paragraph, circle the transitional elements.

Our company takes pride in serving every customer promptly and efficiently; nevertheless, occasionally we must delay filling an order. We received your prepaid request for our Secretarial Handbook on June 19; however, our current stock has been depleted by the overwhelming response to this helpful publication. As a result, we are printing a second edition, and it should be off the press in about eight weeks. In addition to reprinting the handbook, we have updated and expanded it so that the new version will be even more helpful. When this edition is ready for distribution, we will notify you immediately. In the meantime, we are returning your check but hope you will reorder when the second edition of the Secretarial Handbook is ready.

Basically there are four types of transitional elements: words, phrases, clauses, and repetition of key words. From the paragraph above, list one example of each of these transitional elements.

37. WORDS: _____

38. PHRASES: _____

39. CLAUSES: _____

40. REPETITION OF KEY WORDS: _____

41 - 45

The following paragraph is wordy and written using only simple sentences. As written, it is very monotonous to read. Rewrite the paragraph using a variety of sentences and concise language. Eliminate unnecessary information.

Fifty-six students will graduate from the Blackwell Secretarial School. Graduation will be on Friday, May 4. The ceremonies will be held at 7 p.m. in the Municipal Auditorium. Faculty, parents, and friends are invited to witness the event. The school was founded in 1950. The founder of the school is Geraldine Blackwell. She will present the certificates. The students have studied for twelve months. They have perfected their clerical skills. Each student has prepared a resume. Each student has also practiced job interview situations. The students are well-prepared for every opportunity. They look forward to careers in the business world.

46 - 50

Even in negative situations, it is important to maintain goodwill between the customer and your company. Using positive language, the "you" attitude, and a friendly but firm tone, you can help gain your desired objective and yet keep the customer's favor and patronage. Collecting past due bills is such a situation that requires these writing techniques. Completely rewrite the following paragraph in a manner that will encourage the customer to pay the past due account and retain his/her goodwill.

We shall waste no further effort trying to persuade you to pay your past due account. You have not made a payment in the past six months and your unpaid balance is now $250. We know how to use the law against people who do not pay their bills. Evidently you do not intend to pay your debts unless you are forced to do so by a lawsuit. This is your last chance to settle out of court. The law protects honest businesspeople against deadbeats like you.

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

Performance Objective 1

The student will be able to compose goodwill letters of approximately three paragraphs, each containing the following:
Paragraph 1 promotes goodwill.
Paragraph 2 expands and explains.
Paragraph 3 reiterates goodwill.

Circle T for TRUE and F for FALSE for the following statements.

T F 1. The goodwill letter is the most frequently used business letter, and it expresses thanks, offers congratulations, or asks the reader to act in a specific way.

T F 2. A goodwill letter usually contains (in this order) the following three paragraphs:
Paragraph 1 tells why the letter is written.
Paragraph 2 expands on the information given.
Paragraph 3 leaves the reader with a positive feeling.

3. Briefly state the outline for a goodwill letter.

_____

_____

_____

OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

Performance Objective 2 The student will be able to compose letters of request of approximately three paragraphs, each containing the following:
Paragraph 1 states the request.
Paragraph 2 explains the request.
Paragraph 2 or 3 motivates the reader to act.
Paragraph 3 or 4 courteously closes the letter.

Circle T for TRUE and F for FALSE for the following statements.

T F 1. A letter of request usually asks the reader to act in a specific way, to make a contribution, or to provide you with a service or information.

T F 2. A letter of request usually contains (in this order) the following four paragraphs:
Paragraph 1 states the request.
Paragraph 2 motivates the reader to act.
Paragraph 3 explains the request.
Paragraph 4 closes courteously.

T F 3. It is important to state your request in the first paragraph so the reader will know immediately what the letter is about.

T F 4. In a letter of request, the best way to motivate the reader to grant the request is to show the reader how his/her actions will benefit the writer.

5. Briefly state the outline for a letter of request.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Performance Objective 3

The student will be able to compose letters of positive response of approximately three paragraphs, each containing the following:
Paragraph 1 restates the request and responds with an affirmative answer.
Paragraph 2 gives pertinent information.
Paragraph 3 closes the letter with an expression of goodwill.

Circle T for TRUE and F for FALSE for the following statements:

T F 1. The positive response letter can usually be written easily and quickly because the writer gives an answer that is welcomed by the reader.

T F 2. The positive response letter usually contains, in this order, the following three paragraphs:
Paragraph 1 restates the request and answers "yes."
Paragraph 2 gives any pertinent information.
Paragraph 3 closes with an expression of goodwill.

T F 3. The opening paragraph of a positive response letter usually lists "who" and "what," while the second paragraph explains "when," "where," and "why."

T F 4. The positive response letter is also an opportunity to build goodwill for your company.

5. Briefly state the outline for a positive response letter.

_____

_____

_____

OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

Performance Objective 4 The student will be able to compose letters of negative response of approximately four paragraphs, each containing the following:
Paragraph 1 expresses goodwill.
Paragraph 2 says "no" and explains the refusal.
Paragraph 3 offers an alternative, if available.
Paragraph 4 closes the letter with an expression of goodwill.

Circle T for TRUE and F for FALSE for the following statements.

T F 1. The negative response letter usually contains, in this order, the following three paragraphs:
Paragraph 1 expresses goodwill.
Paragraph 2 says "no" and explains the refusal.
Paragraph 3 closes with goodwill.

T F 2. Negative response letters are the most difficult to write because the letter must refuse to grant the request, but still maintain the goodwill of the reader.

T F 3. It is usually better to explain the refusal before actually saying "no."

T F 4. If possible, a letter of negative response should offer an alternative solution to the request.

T F 5. A skilled writer can give a negative response and still leave the reader with a favorable impression by using flattery and hollow promises in the last paragraph.

6. Briefly state the outline for a negative response letter.

_____

_____

_____

_____

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

Performance Objective 1-4 The student will be able to compose goodwill letters. . . . . letters of request. . . .letters of positive response. . . . letters of negative response.

From the list below, indicate the type of business letter appropriate for the following situations.

A Goodwill Letter C Positive Response

B Letter of Request D Negative Response

____1. Ask for a catalog from an office supply firm.

____2. Congratulate a business associate on a promotion.

____3. Refuse to send requested material due to its confidential nature.

____4. The Red Cross asks for assistance for storm victims.

____5. You respond to the Red Cross's plea for assistance by sending a $25 donation.

____6. Send best wishes to an office employee on his/her forthcoming marriage.

____7. A mail-order company sends requested materials.

____8. Decline an invitation to speak at a club meeting due to a previous engagement.

____9. A company announces the opening of a new branch office in your town.

____10. Inform the customer you are unable to fill an order because the item is out of stock.

Almost all business letters can be written according to a simple plan. Briefly state the contents of the paragraphs of a business letter.

11. Opening Paragraph_____

_____

12. Middle Paragraph(s)_____

_____

13. Closing Paragraph_____

_____

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

Performance Objective 5

The student will demonstrate the ability to use the following writing techniques:

1. Message is concisely written.
2. Transitions occur where necessary.
3. The "you" attitude is obvious.
4. The message is written using positive language.
5. Sentence structure is varied.
6. The writer has promoted goodwill.
7. The letter is mechanically correct and accurate.

Circle T for TRUE and F for FALSE for the following statements.

T F 1. Employers seek applicants with highly developed communication skills for office employees.

T F 2. Ineffective communications can destroy the goodwill and credibility of a company.

T F 3. All business letters have common purposes--to communicate ideas and to promote desired results.

T F 4. The "you" attitude in a business letter is achieved by using the word "you" several times in the letter.

T F 5. To encourage the reader to react in the way you wish, you must be able to show how that reaction will benefit your company.

T F 6. A reader oriented letter will encourage the reader to react in a positive manner.

T F 7. The "you" attitude should be a common aspect of all business letters.

T F 8. On the average, business letters should be two to three paragraphs long.

9. Briefly explain the technique of the "you" attitude in writing business letters and tell why it is important to building goodwill.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Match the following ten hints for communicating effectively with their definitions below.

A. Plan ahead
B. Be concise
C. Use transitions wisely
D. Rely on the "you" attitude
E. Emphasize the positive
F. Converse with the reader
G. Vary the sentence structure
H. Keep paragraphs short
I. Maintain goodwill
J. Assure correctness

_____ 10. As a means of maintaining reader interest, use a variety of sentence structures in each message.

_____ 11. Point out to the reader what can be done rather than what cannot be done.

_____ 12. The purpose of any paragraph can usually be accomplished in one to five sentences.

_____ 13. Whenever you write a letter, picture the reader sitting across from you, then write as if you were speaking directly to the reader.

_____ 14. Know what you want to say before you begin to write.

_____ 15. After a piece of correspondence has been written and typed, proofread it. Be sure that the letter is placed attractively on the page, that it has been typed accurately, and that it states clearly the message you intended.

_____ 16. Keep the reader in mind at all times. After you have composed a message, reread it to see if it emphasizes the advantages to the reader rather than the benefit to the writer.

_____ 17. Any message you write should "flow" smoothly.

_____ 18. Never be "short" or sarcastic in your writing. If you alienate even one individual, that person may influence others to stop working with you.

_____ 19. The skilled writer knows how to judge the amount of information to include in a letter and how to write sentences and paragraphs that give complete information without being "wordy."

20. Transitional elements help the message flow from one thought to another. In the following paragraph, circle the transitional elements.

Our company takes pride in serving every coustomer promptly and efficiently; nevertheless, occasionally we must delay filling an order. We received your prepaid request for our Secretarial Handbook on June 19; however, our current stock has been depleted by the overwhelming response to this helpful publication. As a result, we are printing a second edition, and it should be off the press in about eight weeks. In addition to reprinting the handbook, we have updated and expanded it so that the new version will be even more helpful. When this edition is ready for distribution, we will notify you immediately. In the meantime, we are returning your check but hope you will reorder when the second edition of the Secretarial Handbook is ready.

Basically there are four types of transitional elements: words, phrases, clauses, and repetition of key words. From the paragraph above, list one example of each of these transitional elements.

21. WORDS: _____

22. PHRASES: _____

23. CLAUSES: _____

24. REPETITION OF KEY WORDS: _____

The following paragraph is wordy and written using only simple sentences. As written, it is very monotonous to read. Rewrite the paragraph using a variety of sentences and concise language. Eliminate unnecessary information.

FIfty-six students will graduate from the Blackwell Secretarial School. Graduation will be on Friday, May 4. The ceremonies will be held at 7 p.m. in the Municipal Auditorium. Faculty, parents, and friends are invited to witness the event. The school was founded in 1950. The founder of the school is Geraldine Blackwell. She will present the certificates. The students have studied for twelve months. They have perfected their clerical skills. Each student has prepared a resume. Each student has also practiced job interview situations. The students are well-prepared for every opportunity. They look forward to careers in the business world.

25. _____

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Even in negative situations, it is important to maintain goodwill between the customer and your company. Using positive language, the "you" attitude, and a friendly but firm tone, you can help gain your desired objective and yet keep the customer's favor and partonage. Collecting past due bills is such a situation that requires these writing techniques. Completely rewrite the following paragraph in a manner that will encourage the customer to pay the past due account and retain his/her goodwill.

We shall waste no further effort trying to persuade you to pay your past due account. You have not made a payment in the past six months and your unpaid balance is now $250. We know how to use the law against people who do not pay their bills. Evidently you do not intend to pay your debt unless you are forced to do so by a lawsuit. This is your last chance to settle out of court. The law protects honest businesspeople against deadbeats like you.

26. _____

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DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

PERFORMANCE TEST I

Using the information in the situations below, write a letter to illustrate each of the four types of business letter. Type each letter on the letterhead stationery that's provided, using any acceptable format. Proofread your work and make any necessary corrections so that you produce mailable letters. Remember the "you" attitude and other techniques for effective communication.

GOODWILL LETTER

Goodwill is a valuable asset to every business, and no successful company can get along without it. As office manager for Durwcod Furniture Company, you notice a large number of dormant accounts. In years past, many of these customers regularly purchased furniture from your company and paid their bills promptly. This decline in charge accounts seems to correspond in time to the start of computerized billing. You feel the computer system is efficient, and you have had few complaints about the accuracy of the billing system. However, the personal interest in customers has been lost. Your task is to write a letter to these customers telling them of your company's excellent services and products. Encourage them to reactivate their accounts.

LETTER OF REQUEST

The receipt of the letter from Durwood Furniture Company prompted you to inquire about some dining room chairs. Several years ago you purchased a dining room set from this company. At that time you purchased a set with only six chairs. You have been very pleased with the quality of the furniture, but in the meantime, your family has grown and you need additional chairs. Write to the Durwood Furniture Company, 3895 Broadway, Austin, TX 78768. Ask if they still carry Pineway brand of furniture and if additional chairs (Model #8760032) for your set are still available. You currently live about 75 miles from Austin, at 1609 Lovely Lane, Lampasas, TX 76581. You want to know the price of the chairs and if they can be shipped by express freight and what the shipping charges would be.

POSITIVE RESPONSE

As salesperson for the Durwood Furniture Company, you are asked to respond to the letter of request above. The chairs requested are available at a cost of $89 each and could be shipped to Lampasas by express freight for $12.50 each. However, at the present time individual chairs are not in stock at Durwood's, but could be ordered from the factory for delivery in about six weeks. Write a letter giving the pertinent data and ask how many chairs the customer wishes to order.

NEGATIVE RESPONSE

As salesperson for the Durwood Furniture Company, you are asked to respond to the letter of request above. The chairs requested are not available because the factory no longer produces that particular line of furniture. However, if the customer wishes to bring in one of the chairs, perhaps a similar chair could be found in one of Durwood's many catalogs. As salesperson, you would be happy to assist the customer in trying to find additional chairs.

PERFORMANCE TEST

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

DURWOOD

FURNITURE COMPANY

3895 BROADWAY AUSTIN, TX 78758

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

PERFORMANCE TEST II

Using the information in the situations below, write a letter to illustrate each of the four types of business letters. Type each letter on the letterhead stationery that is provided, using any acceptable format. Proofread your work and make any necessary corrections so that you produce mailable letters. Remember the "you" attitude and other techniques for effective communication.

LETTER OF REQUEST

As program chairman of the Future Business Leaders of Eastfield College, you are responsible for obtaining a guest speaker for the April 15 dinner meeting. Members of the club have suggested Dr. Jason Bennett and you have heard he is an excellent speaker on the subject of automated office systems.

Write to Dr. Bennett at East Texas State University, Department of Business Education, Commerce, TX 75428. Ask him to speak to your club for about 30 minutes on April 15. Invite him to be your guest for dinner at 7 p.m. in Room 20 of the Student Services Building. The program will start at approximately 8 p.m., and the meeting should adjourn by 9 p.m. Your club is not able to pay speaking fees, but will pay travel expenses for him.

POSITIVE RESPONSE

Dr. Bennett is a strong supporter of Future Business Leaders and is happy to speak at the meeting on April 15. Write a letter accepting the speaking engagement. He will need a slide projector and screen for his presentation entitled "Office Equipment for the Future." Address the letter to (your name), Future Business Leaders, Eastfield College, 3737 Motley drive, Mesquite, TX 75159.

NEGATIVE RESPONSE

Dr. Bennett is a strong supporter of Future Business Leaders. However, he will be out of town attending his daughter's wedding and is not able to speak on April 15. He has been working closely with a graduate assistant, Jodi Jimenez, and recommends her as a speaker for the group. Ms. Jimenez has been doing research work on office management techniques and has a dynamic and energetic personality. Or perhaps Dr. Bennett can speak to the group at a later date. Write a letter declining the invitation to speak. Suggest Jodi Jimenez as an alternate. Address the letter to the same address as the letter of positive response.

GOODWILL LETTER

As the secretary of the Future Business Leaders, you are to write a letter to Dr. Bennett thanking him for speaking to your group. His talk was very interesting, and the members of the club were challenged by his innovative ideas. Many expressed their desire to have Dr. Bennett speak to them again next year. Write a thank you letter to Dr. Bennett, using the same address as the letter of request.

EAST TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS EDUCATION COMMERCE, TX 75428

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

PERFORMANCE TEST III

Using the information in the situations below, write a memo to illustrate each of the four types of business letters. Type each memo on the stationery that is provided, using any acceptable format. Proofread your work and make any necessary corrections so that you produce mailable documents. Remember the "you" attitude and other techniques for effective communication.

LETTER OF REQUEST

You work in the accounting office of the Amhurst Company, and you have volunteered to be the United Way representative for your department. You believe this is a worthy cause because in an average year the United Way contributes about $250,000 to assist local charities, such as the YMCA, Scouting programs, Meals on Wheels, facilities for the handicapped, and the local library.

It is your responsibility to contact each person in your office and solicit funds for the United Way. Employees may give a one-time donation or pledge a monthly contribution to be deducted from their paychecks. Write a general letter to the 36 employeees in your department asking them to make a donation to the United Way. The campaign will run during the month of October and employees are asked to respond before the end of the month.

POSITIVE RESPONSE

You have been contacted by the United Way representative in your office to contribute to this charity. Inasmuch as you feel it is a worthy cause, you plan to donate $120 and wish this amount to be deducted from your salary at a rate of $10 per month. Write a letter in response to the letter of request above and tell the representative of your willingness to contribute to the United Way.

NEGATIVE RESPONSE

You have been contacted by the United Way representative in your office to contribute to this charity. While you feel it is a worthy cause, your financial obligations at home prevent you from making a donation. Write a letter in response to the letter of request above and tell the representative you are unable to make a contribution at this time.

GOODWILL LETTER (2 letters)

As the United Way representative in your office you are pleased by the generous response of your fellow employees. Your office has collected cash or pledges totaling $1,500. Write a letter to those employees who made donations to the United Way campaign. Thank them for their contribution and encourage their continued support of this organization.

Write another letter to those who were unable to contribute. Thank them for responding to your letter and try to build goodwill towards the United Way. Encourage them to make a donation next year.

AMHURST & CO.

DATE /

TO /

FROM /

SUBJECT /

AMHURST & CO.

DATE /

TO /

FROM /

SUBJECT /

DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Writing Business Letters

ANSWER KEYS

50-Point Test

1.	T	6.	T
2.	F	7.	T
3.	T	8.	F
4.	F	9.	T
5.	T	10.	F

11. The "you" attitude means that the writer keeps in mide the reader's point of view and puts the reader's interest first. The writer must be able to show how an action will benefit the reader.

12. (1) Promote goodwill
    (2) Expand the first paragraph
    (3) Reiterate goodwill

13. (1) State the request
    (2) Explain the request
    (3) Motivate the reader to act
    (4) Close courteously

14. (1) Restate the request and say yes
    (2) Give pertinent information
    (3) Close with goodwill

15. (1) Express goodwill
    (2) Say "no" and explain the refusal
    (3) Offer an alternative if availabl
    (4) Close with goodwill

16.	B	21.	A	26.	G	31.	J
17.	A	22.	C	27.	E	32.	D
18.	D	23.	D	28.	H	33.	c
19.	B	24.	A	29.	F	34.	I
20.	C	25.	D	30.	A	35.	B

36. Our company takes pride in serving every customer promptly and efficiently; nevertheless, occasionally we must delay filling an order. We received your prepaid request for our Secretarial Handbook on June 19; however, our current stock has been depleted by the overwhelming response to this helpful publication. As a result, we are printing a second edition, and it should be off the press in about eight weeks. In addition to reprinting the handbook, we have updated and expanded it so that the new version will be even more helpful. When this edition is ready for distribution, we will notify you immediately. In the meantime, we are returning your check but hope you will reorder when the second edition of the Secretarial Handbook is ready.

(Scoring - Students should identify at least 6 of the 10 transitional elements.)

37. WORDS: Nevertheless, However, but
38. PHRASES: As a result, In the meantime, In addition to reprinting the handbook
39. CLAUSES: When this edition is ready for distribution
40. REPETITION OF KEY WORDS: Secretarial Handbook, second edition, helpful

(Scoring - Students should list at least one for each type of transition.)

ANSWER KEYS

41 - 45 ***Sample-Student's answers will vary***

Fifty-six students will graduate from the Blackwell Secretarial School on Friday, May 4. Faculty, parents, and friends are invited to witness the event at 7 p.m. in the Municipal Auditorium. The founder of the school, Geraldine Blackwell, will present the certificates. The students have studied for twelve months and have perfected their clerical skills. Each student has prepared a resume and practiced job interview situations. The students are well-prepared for every opportunity, and they are looking forward to a career in the business world.

46 - 50

What would you do if you were in our place? I'm sure you would understand the need for collecting past due accounts. Do you realize your bill is seriously overdue? The current balance is now $250. You must have a good reason for not making a payment in the past six months. Let us know your situation; perhaps we can reschedule your payments to help you meet your obligation. We value your patronage and are confident you will want to do what is right.

Performance Objective 1

1. F
2. T
3. (1) Promote goodwill
   (2) Expand the first paragraph
   (3) Reiterate goodwill

Performance Objective 2

1. T
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. (1) State the request
   (2) Explain the request
   (3) Close courteously

Performance Objective 3

1. T
2. T
3. F
4. T
5. (1) Restate the request and say "yes"
   (2) Give pertinent information
   (3) Close with an expression of goodwill

Performance Objective 4

1. F
2. T
3. T
4. T
5. F
6. (1) Express goodwill
   (2) Say "no" and explain the refusal
   (3) Offer an alternative, if available
   (4) Close with an expression of goodwill

Performance Objective 1-4

1.	B	6.	A
2.	A	7.	C
3.	D	8.	D
4.	B	9.	A
5.	C	10.	D

11. Tells who, what, when, where, and why.
12. Explains the details.
13. Promotes a positive reaction from the reader.

Performance Objective 5

1.	T	5.	F
2.	T	6.	T
3.	T	7.	T
4.	F	8.	F

9. The "you" attitude means that the writer keeps in mind the reader's point of view and puts the reader's interest first. The writer must be able to show how an action will benefit the reader.

10.	G	15.	J
11.	E	16.	D
12.	H	17.	C
13.	F	18.	I
14.	A	19.	B

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ANSWER KEYS

25. ***SAMPLE-Students' answers will vary***

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